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SUBJECT: TAR OFFICIALS TOUT BENEFITS OF NOMAD RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS

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CLASSIFIED BY: Kathryn Pongonis, Acting Consul General, United States Consulate, Chengdu.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. Summary: According to government officials in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), policies to resettle Tibetan nomads and pastoralists are not only good for the grassland, but are also good for the people because they improve living conditions and access to education and health care. In the TAR, five types of resettlement programs provide subsidies of between USD 1290-3225 to individual households. During the course of the Eleventh Five-Year Program (before 2010), the government hopes to resettle over 220,000 households, or 80 percent of the rural population in the TAR. Officials said the policy was warmly welcomed and that an open and modern society had a significant effect on enticing young Tibetans to abandon a traditional herding lifestyle. While government officials paint a rosy picture of Tibetan resettlement, critics express concern that resettlement policies pose a threat to the important nomadic component of the traditional Tibetan lifestyle. End Summary.

¶2. (U) During a March reporting trip to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), CG, Beijing POLMINCOUNS, and Chengdu CONGENOFF met with officials from the Naqu Prefecture Animal Husbandry and Labor and Social Security Bureaus, and TAR Poverty Alleviation and Animal Husbandry Bureaus, the principal offices tasked with carrying out nomadic and pastoral resettlement work. "The policy to resettle Tibetan nomads and pastoralists is not only good for the grassland, but is also good for the people," according to Wang Jian, Director of the TAR Poverty Alleviation Office (PAO). With a fixed dwelling and lifestyle, Tibetan children have better access to education and families can get health care. Wang said that resettlement takes numerous forms. The TAR's "Rural Economic Housing Project" includes the following five categories:

- nomadic resettlement;
- housing project for poor households;
- endemic disease relocation;
- house repair project for middle class people; and
- housing project for border households

¶3. (SBU) Unlike Tibetan areas outside the TAR, there is no "ecological immigration" which is a program linked to the Grassland Responsibility System and is not considered migration, according to Wang. He added that ecological preservation programs such as "Convert Pasture to Grassland" were not

successful.

#### The "Incentives"

14. (SBU) Households receive monetary "subsidies" for their participation in the resettlement program which range from 10,000-25,000 RMB (USD 1290-3225) per household. According to all officials in separate meetings, the subsidies are cash payments which are not expected to be repaid. (Note: Other Consulate non-governmental contacts in the TAR told us there is a general belief that the resettlement "subsidies" are in fact loans. End note.)

15. (SBU) Resettlement is a completely voluntary program, according to Dozha (one name), Director of the Naqu Prefecture Animal Husbandry Bureau. Nomads and farmers provide their own labor to build their new homes. When queried about whether resettled families are required or forced to sell their livestock, Dozha responded that the government was in no way involved in the sale of livestock, nor did it require such sale. He added that some households might choose to sell some animals in order to cover the additional costs of building their new homes. In another meeting, a representative of the TAR PAO said selling a couple of yaks "does no harm to a family" and can help them raise 8000 RMB (USD 1032) toward the construction of their new house. (Note: One yak currently sells for 4000 RMB (USD516) or 14 RMB (USD 1.80) per pound in the TAR. End Note.) Tsutrim (one name), Vice Director of the TAR Animal Husbandry

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Bureau said his office was developing a program of subsidies to encourage sale of livestock because in general nomads are not willing to kill or sell their animals.

16. (U) Wang of the TAR PAO said 25,000 households were resettled in the TAR in 2006. In the Eleventh Five-Year Program, there is enough funding from the central level to accomplish the resettlement of 220,000 households in the TAR, after which 80 percent of the rural population will be settled.

Is the Nomadic Lifestyle a Way of the Past?

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17. (C) When asked about the effect of the resettlement program on young Tibetans and whether they were interested in continuing a lifestyle of herding, Wang of the TAR PAO said that the "open society" affected Tibetan lifestyles more than just a resettlement policy. "If society were not open, they would stay with traditional ways, but because of modernization and contact with the outside world they know about and desire changes in their lifestyle." Wang insisted Tibetans have freedom to choose their lifestyle and added that the PAO was in fact having a hard time meeting the demand for settlement. He said, "everyone living in a tent is not a good thing," and that the government could "maintain the culture by preserving a few tents." Wang stated, "they can remember their culture, but they don't need to live the ancient lifestyle. We must remember that we are not doing animal protection, we are doing human development." In a separate meeting, Tsutrim of the TAR Animal Husbandry Bureau echoed the sentiment that the resettlement policy was warmly welcomed and that there is cooperation at all levels of government.

#### Comment

18. (C) The Consulate's ability to solicit opinions on the policy from resettled nomads and farmers in Tibet is quite limited. Even though government officials paint a rosy picture, there is at least some resistance to a policy that has been criticized by outside observers as posing a threat to the important nomadic component of the traditional Tibetan lifestyle. In private conversations on a number of reporting trips, we have heard general grumbling about lack of economic opportunities for resettled families and inability to sell livestock at fair-market prices.

